

Frank Kimball House
21 West Plaza Boulevard
National City
San Diego County
California

HABS No. CA-2166

HABS
CAL,
37-NATC,
4-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FRANK KIMBALL HOUSE

HABS No. CA-2166

HABS
CA4
37-NATC,
4-

Location: 21 West Plaza Boulevard (formerly Tenth Street), National City, San Diego County, California.

Present Owner: Thomas Crosby, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 4630.

Present Use: Dwelling.

Significance: The house was the residence of the founder of National City, Frank Kimball. It was a lavish house of its time and is one of the few remaining structures of its era in San Diego County. It has been moved and extensively altered.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1868. (The San Diego Union in its October 17, 1868 issue, reported that the roof was being.)
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Frank Kimball House is located on a property composed of Lots 14 and 15 and portions of Lots 12 and 13, Block 10, National City. The Kimball House was apparently moved to this site about 1910. The following references are from deed books in the San Diego County Recorder's Office:

1907	Deed of August 15, 1907, recorded in Book 421, p. 382, Abstract Title and Trust Co. to R. L. Lewis.
1912	Deed of February 13, 1912, recorded in Book 547, p. 356. R. L. Lewis to Adam Herbold.
1913	Deed of June 2, 1913, recorded in Book 763, p. 43. Adam Herbold to Karl Welsbacher. The property remained in the Welsbacher family until 1973.
1973	Deed of July 31, 1973, recorded in file 211786. Karl M. Welsbacher to Thomas Crosby Jr., Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 4630.
4. Original plans, construction etc.: There are no original plans known. The newspapers reported that the building cost \$8,000 to \$10,000 and had hot and cold water in every room in the house.
5. Alterations and additions: The building has been extensively altered. From the front on Tenth Street it is barely recognizable as a mid-nineteenth century building because of the

later, Edwardian porch and windows. However, the evidence of old photographs and maps allows a tentative probably accurate reconstruction of what changes have been made.

The house originally fronted National Avenue. Several photographs of the period show it as an irregularly massed Italianate structure with four-over-four sliding sash windows, and with brackets supporting the cornice. These photographs have been copied for the HABS records. The building's original orientation can be determined from a map dated August 1907. This map was probably published by Sanborn Map Co. The house was on a large lot bounded by National Avenue, First Avenue (now Roosevelt), Ninth Street and Eleventh Street, facing National Avenue. To the north was the main block of the house. To the south there was a smaller two-story block, and to the south of this a low one-story structure, possibly an addition. There were several outhouses on the property.

The great change in the property apparently occurred about 1910. At that time Tenth Street was cut through, and the property had to be moved. It was also considerably remodeled at the same time. The front wing of the house (facing National Avenue) with its projecting bay window was removed, as was the small one-story structures to the south. Then the entire building was moved north about 40' and turned ninety degrees. This exposed the truncated front elevation to Tenth Street, necessitating the rebuilding of much of this elevation. Two story pilasters were added on all four elevations. At this time apparently, the woodwork of the first floor parlor, dining room and alcove were installed. These match the style and detail of the pilasters and porch.

B. Historical Context:

Frank Kimball was the founder of National City. Originally from New England, he and his brothers became successful builders in San Francisco before Frank journeyed to Southern California for his health. In June 1868 the brothers purchased El Rancho de la Nacion, consisting of 26,631 acres for \$30,000, and laid out the town of National City. Frank Kimball engaged in a large variety of businesses. He became involved with land, the railroads, agriculture, and a number of other ventures including the founding of a brick manufactory in National City. He was instrumental in several important agricultural developments, helping establish the American olive and citrus industries and importing the first Eucalyptus trees in the county. Kimball established an Experimental Station for Horticulture, and from 1888-1889 served as State Commissioner of Agriculture. However, in spite of his expertise in many fields, Kimball was plagued by business problems which culminated with his participation in attempting to bring the railroad to National City.

By 1897 Kimball had lost so much money that he was obliged to give up

his home through a mortgage foreclosure, and he moved to an old building owned by a nephew. Very slowly he recovered enough money to buy another house in 1908, but he was already an old man, and he died in 1913.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views:

Two stereo views of the house by Parker and Parker, c. 1873 in the collection of the San Diego Historical Society, Serra Museum.

Three photographs in the National City Library. One with a note "Courtesy Charles Copeland, c. 1885." This photograph, however, appears to be a copy of one side of the photograph listed above. The other two photographs show the house from the street in front and are labeled "Courtesy Donald Smith, c. 1906."

Bird's Eye View of National City, published by Frank P. Burgess and Co. (n.d.). Collection Title Insurance Co. Copy in the National City Library. This lithograph shows the location of the building in the town and also a view of the building in the lower margin.

Map of part of National City. Blue line print dated August 1907. In the possession of Rurik Kallis of San Diego.

2. Bibliography:

King, Francis K., Frank Kimball, Pioneer of National City. (Thesis, San Diego State University, copy in National City Public Library.)

Mizony, Paul, A Few Highlights of the Early Day History of National City, California, San Diego, 1954.

Phillips, Irene, National City: Pioneer Town, National City, 1960.

The Story of El Rancho de la Nacion, National City, 1959.

San Diego Union, October 17, 1868. This is the source of the date of the building.

3. Interviews:

Interview with Howell Lewis, National City. Mr. Lewis lived in the house from 1907-1912.

4. Drawings of the house, largely "as is" condition, 1974 by Bird, Fujimoto and Fish for the city of National City. Two sheets: 1) plans and section, and 2) elevations have been reproduced for inclusion in the HABS records.

Prepared by: Robert Bruegmann
Historian, HABS San Diego Team
Summer 1975

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Description of Exterior:

1. Number of stories: Two.
2. Layout, shape: The main block is L-shaped, with a square addition to the west.
3. Over-all dimensions: 51'-6" x 30'-2".
4. Foundations: Not visible.
5. Wall construction and finish: The wood-frame house is covered with flush siding with recessed joints. All corners have pilasters. Vertical skirting covers the crawl space below the water table.
6. Structural framing system: Not known.
7. Porches: The porch begins about 3' from the east corner of the house and runs completely across the south elevation, extending about 8' beyond the west corner of the main block. The porch entablature is supported by four columns. Balusters between the columns are square in section. A similar railing with balusters runs around the porch roof, creating a second story balcony. The entablature has a molded cornice with large overhangs, a large frieze, and a small architrave.
8. Chimneys: The house has two chimneys, one located in the main block, and the other near the rear facade of the wing. Both are brick chimneys with corbeled caps.
9. Openings:
 - a. Doors and doorways: The front door, on the south elevation, has been replaced. The new door has 32 lights and a transom. The door on the east elevation has a transom and two tiers of molded panels. The door from the dining room, facing west, has a transom and four tiers of molded panels, the top panel being glazed. The door to a

screened porch addition on the west elevation of the wing has a similar door, but without a transom. A similar door also leads to the porch over the front entry porch.

- b. Windows: The western bay of the front porch has been enclosed to create a sleeping room. Beyond this, the south elevation has five windows. Two of these are directly above one another in the wing. These windows are double hung, four-over-four sash. The trim is plain, with the head of the second floor window coinciding with the frieze. The main facade also has two double-hung, four-over-four windows with plain trim, one on each floor. Three adjoining casement windows are located west of the door to the second floor porch. The windows and door are all covered by a hood with molded cornice and Italianate brackets. The east elevation has five windows, double hung, four-over-four, with plain trim. The two first floor windows also have Italianate cornices. The north elevation has seven windows. The four in the main block are identical to the those in east elevation. The wing has two double casement windows on the first floor, six lights each, with plain trim. The second floor has a double hung, four-over-four, window. The west elevation has two sets of paired casement windows. The one on the second floor abuts against the corner pilaster.

10. Roof:

- a. Shape: The main block and wing each have asphalt shingled hip roofs.
- b. Cornice: The Kimball House has a molded cornice with Italianate brackets. The brackets are located in pairs. On the wing the corner brackets rest directly on the capitals of the pilasters. The pilasters and brackets do not meet on the main block.

B. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The first floor is entered near the center of the main block with the staircase to the west. The living room, or parlor, is located in the NE corner with one window in the north wall and a transomed door in the east wall. To the south an alcove is separated from the living room by columns and entablature similar to that on the front porch. The alcove has windows south and east. The south window is flanked by built-in cabinets and has a window seat. The living room has a marble fireplace on the

west wall. The living room measures 16'-7" x 14'-11", the alcove, 11'-6" x 7'-9". The dining room (now a bedroom) is entered either from the living room, from the hall, or from the rear hall. The east wall shares a chimney with the living room and has a similar marble fireplace. The west wall has a built-in buffet. The dining room forms the base of the L, extending about 6'-0" beyond the basic rectangle. A large, shallow arch supported by square columns with capitols defines this extension. The dining room measures 13'-7" x 20'-11". Under the landing of the stairway is a closet which opens to a small rear hall, which connects the wing and the main block. The south side of the wing contains an informal dining space with a chimney for a stove pipe in the west wall and a window in the south wall. The NE corner has a bath with a paired casement windows. The NW corner has a kitchen with paired casements both west and north.

- b. Second floor plan: The second floor of the wing is accessible from the staircase landing. The south part of the wing is a bedroom, 14'-4" x 9'-5", which connects to a bedroom of the same dimensions (now a kitchen) by French doors. The south bedroom has a window in the south wall. The north bedroom has a window in the north wall and a paired casement window in the west elevation near the north corner. In the main block, there is a small bedroom in the SE corner, with windows in both the east and south walls. This room measures 16'-7" x 9'-0". A large bedroom is located in the NE corner over the living room. This room measures 16'-7" x 13'-8" and has windows in both the north and east walls. The bedroom over the dining room, has windows west, north and east. The area between the NW bedroom and the staircase is a skylit bath, which opens to both the NW bedroom and the hall.
2. Stairway: The stairway is open, and rises to the west, then curves back to the east. This open string stair has an ornate newel post, octagonal in section, that tapers to the railing. The balusters are circular in section, and taper at both ends.
3. Flooring: The first floor throughout has 2" wood flooring. The second floor has 5-1/2" flooring.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All rooms in the main block have lath and plaster walls and ceilings. Picture moldings are found at a height of about 10'-6". The hall and dining room have wainscoting and are papered between the wainscoting and picture molding. The hall wainscoting is simulated tooled leather. The dining room wainscoting is horizontal T & G boarding below the chair rail. The living room and alcove are also papered. The

informal dining room has vertical T & G paneling below a chair rail. The rooms on the second floor of the wing have a picture molding about 8'-5" high and painted plaster walls. The picture rail in the second floor main block is 9'-6" high, on painted plaster walls.

5. Doorways and doors: All door and window frames are heavily molded except the exterior door in the living room. Most doors on the first floor have two tiers of molded panels. The door connecting the living room and dining room has four horizontal panels, the second from the top having 16 lights.

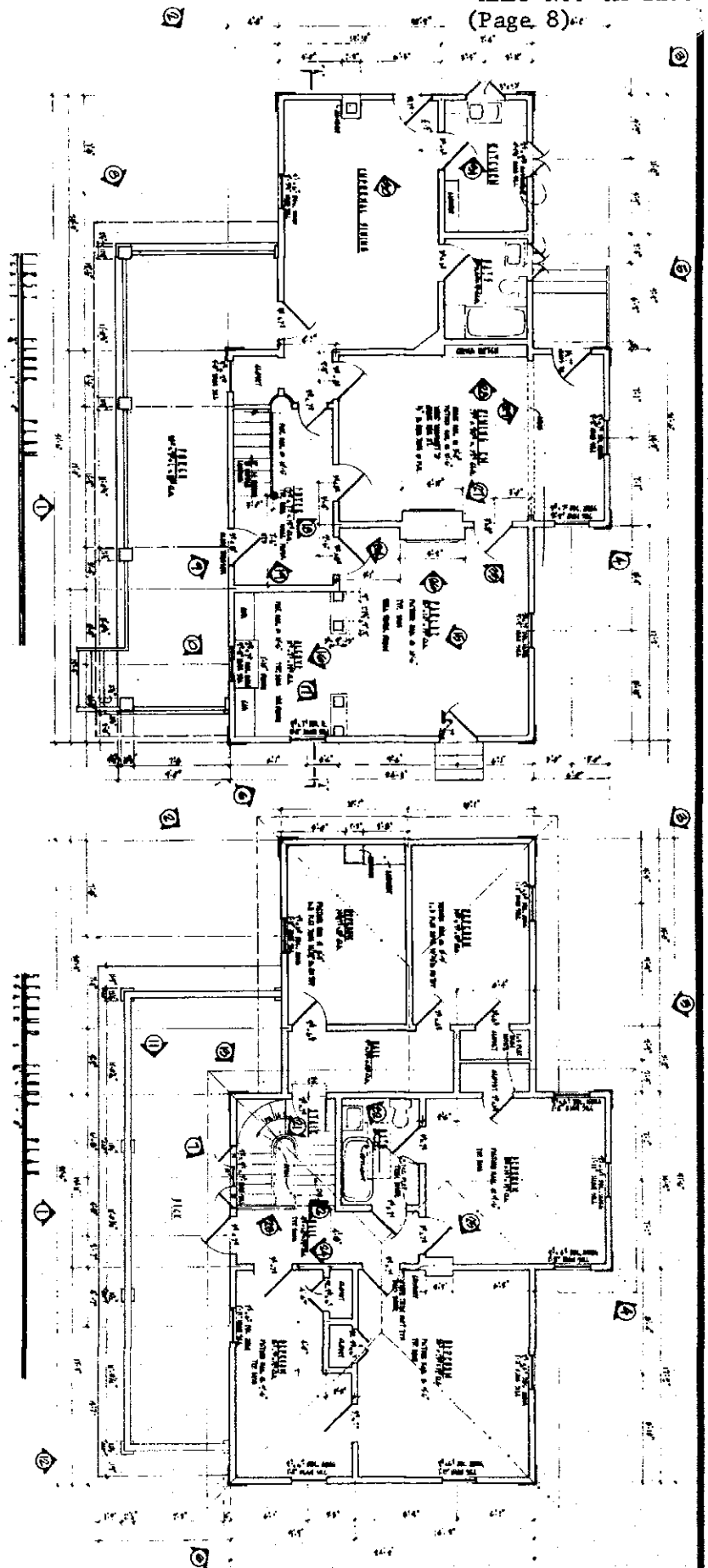
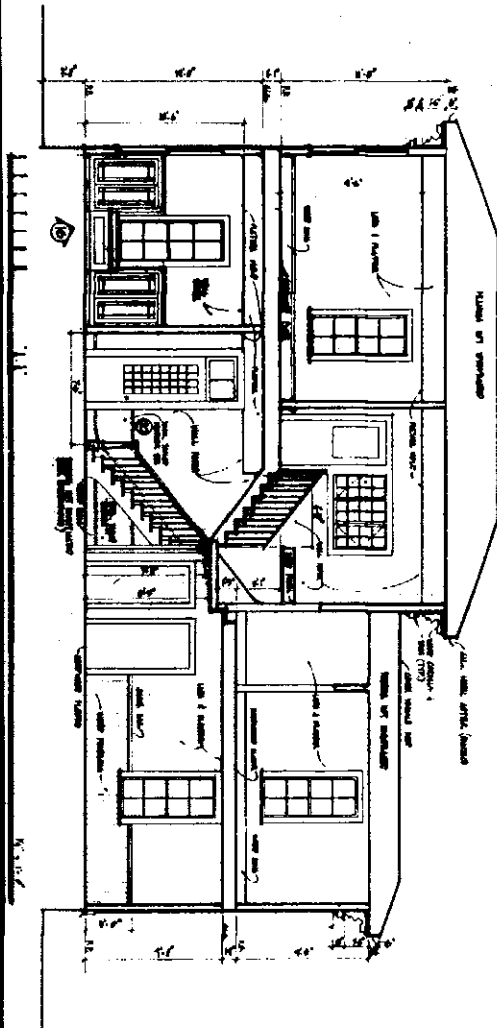
C. Site:

1. General setting: The front elevation of the Kimball House faces south. The house is surrounded on the east and north by commercial structures. There is a small grassy plot to the west, a wood fence, and an auto repair yard beyond.

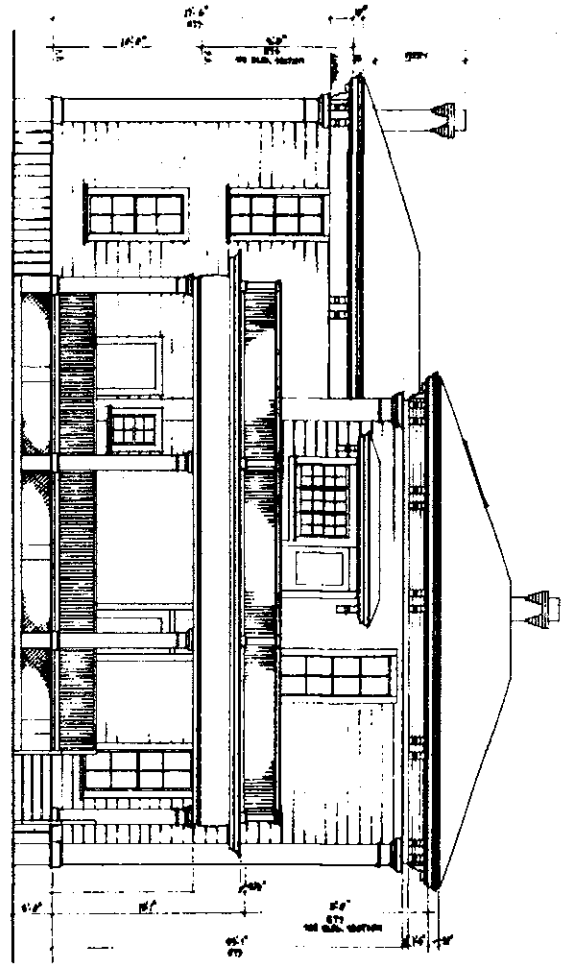
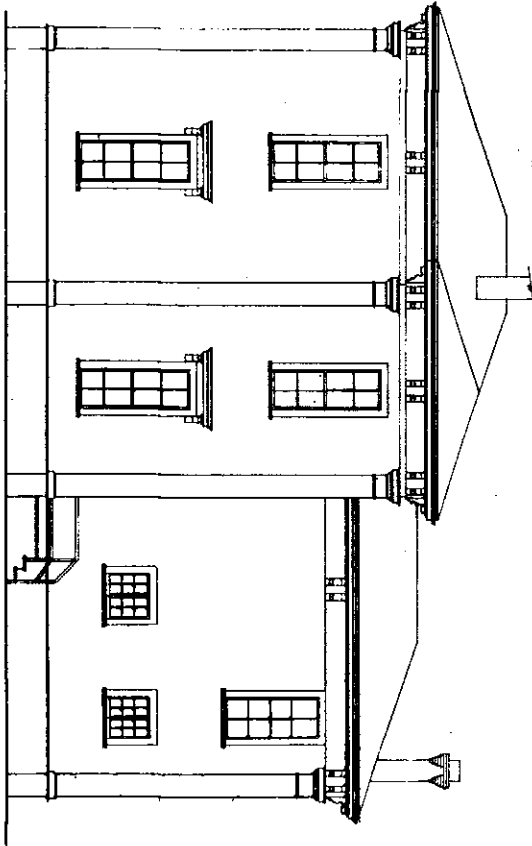
Prepared by: Kim Spurgeon
Supervisor, HABS San Diego Team
Summer 1975

ROOF FIVE DETAIL
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

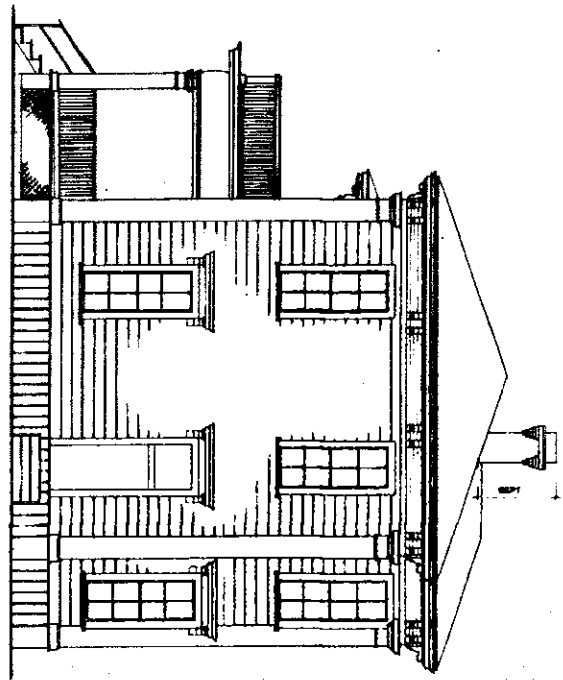
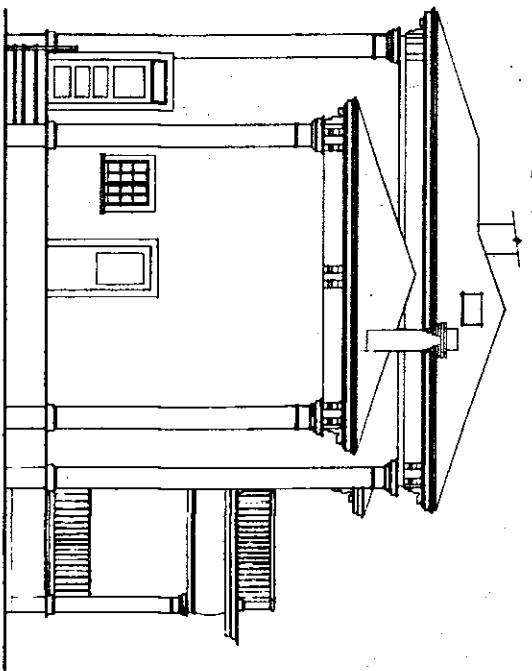
ROOF HEAD DETAIL
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



SEE PLAN SHEET 10-100



SEE PLAN SHEET 10-100



EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS

REAR ELEVATION OF
KIMBALL HOUSE
21. PLAZA BLVD., NATIONAL CITY, CALIFORNIA

BIRD, FUJIMOTO & FISH
AIA ARCHITECTS
5000 FIFTH AVE. SUITE 700 SAN DIEGO, CALIF. 92108 619-594-0000

REVISIONS